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# Does “Anti” in the New Testament Mean “Against”?

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**D**OES the Greek *ἀντί* mean “anti”? This is an interesting question, for it affects the exegesis of many verses of Scripture. *Αντί* is only a preposition, but a preposition is the “rudder” of the sentence. The destination of a ship is decided by the rudder, but the rudder is not the power of the ship. Neither is the preposition the power of the sentence; but a misunderstanding of the preposition may wrongly direct the thought. It is important to know the basic meaning and the use made of the preposition at the time of the writing. A. T. Robertson expressed this well when he said:

It is not enough to know the etymology, the proper formation and the usage in a given writer. Before one has really learned a word, he must know its history up to the present time, certainly up to the period which he is studying. The resultant meaning of a word in any given instance will be determined by the etymology, the history and the immediate context.<sup>1</sup>

Before proceeding to any textual analysis of a sentence containing this preposition, a clear understanding of the basic meaning is necessary. This may be a revelation to some who have always thought *ἀντί* meant “against.” Literally, it has the basic idea of “at the end” of a line or log. So the idea of “face to face” or “opposite” is developed. This may be a favorable “opposite” or an unfavorable “opposite,” depending on the two objects. Two lovers may be at either end of the log or there may be two rival claimants for the same girl’s hand or heart. It makes quite a difference which it is.

One of the latest and best lexicons with which the other standard lexicons agree gives the following meaning, which is based

on its use in Homer, inscriptions, papyri, the LXX, and Josephus—

original meaning local, *opposite*. Figurative:

1. in order to indicate that one person or thing is, or is to be, replaced by another, *instead of, in place of. . . .*

2. in order to indicate that one thing is equivalent to another, *for, as, in place of. . . .*

3. Gen. 44:33 shows how the meaning *in place of* can develop into *in behalf of, for* someone, so that *ἀντί* becomes = *ὑπέρ*.<sup>2</sup>

Moulton and Milligan in their lexicon, after giving several quotations from the papyri and ancient Greek writings, say, “By far the commonest meaning of *ἀντί* is the simple ‘instead of.’ . . . This shades into ‘in exchange for’ or ‘in return for.’”

After having examined every use of *ἀντί* as a preposition in the New Testament and in the Hexateuch of the LXX, the context demands in each case one of the above meanings. Not once could the English word “against” or “because of” be used—with one possible exception where “because of” could be used as well and make sense but would change the theology. This will be discussed later. Let us note a few typical examples. In Matthew 2:22 it is used as follows: “Archelaus did reign in Judaea *in the room of* his father Herod.” In Mark 10:45: “to give his life a ransom *for* many.” Here it could mean “in behalf of,” but it could just as well be “instead of.” In John 1:16 it is used in “grace *for* grace.” This from the context would require “instead of” or “in place of.” Let us note one more example, as Paul uses it in Romans 12:17: “Recompense to no man evil *for* evil.” Here it unquestionably means “in exchange for” or “instead of.”

These are samples of how it is used twenty times as a preposition in the New

Testament and also in the LXX of the Old Testament. In no place, even though in translation we have used the preposition "for" to convey its idea, does it have the concept of "because." The only time it has that meaning is in combination with the relative pronoun plural in the genitive case, when the combination ἀντ' ὧν means "because." The contextual thought would not permit it.

As mentioned before, there is only one reference where the context could permit the idea "because," but it gives a truer and richer meaning if held to its basic meaning of "instead of." It would also seem reasonable to assume that if ἀντί as a preposition in all these cases has the connotation of "instead of," or a related thought, it would also have it here. The text referred to is Hebrews 12:2. While admitting the possibility of "because" as the meaning of "for" to harmonize with the thought of Isaiah 53:11, at second thought there may be no direct connection. Isaiah is speaking of the future at the end of redemption, whereas the writer of Hebrews is speaking of His earthly experience.

Christ did not die for the sake of a reward for Himself. He loved us so much He gave His life. On the cross we are told He "could not see through [beyond] the portals of the tomb."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753. Hence He could not have died for a reward. But He chose, as Moses did, to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. When the devil took Him up to an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world he showed Him all the pleasures of sin. It was a real temptation. With the true meaning of ἀντί before us this verse of Hebrews 12:2 takes on real significance as to the temptation and victory of Christ. It would read, ". . . who instead of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." The English word "for" has a variety of meanings, but in Greek for each one of these meanings there is a separate preposition. For the idea of "because" they would use διά with the accusative case or ἀντ' ὧν as a conjunctive phrase. For "instead of" they use ἀντί throughout the New Testament.

Although it is well known that a preposition as such often has a meaning quite different from that of the same letters when used as a prefix in compound words, yet it is possible that our present-day lexicons

have missed certain meanings that were permissible in the days of the authors. If the lexicon meanings of ἀντί as a preposition can be carried over into the compound words here considered, the result will be an amplified understanding of certain Bible passages.

Let us now look at some examples where ἀντί is used in a compound with a verb. Take, for instance, its use in Colossians 1:24 in the compound verb ἀνταναπληρῶ. Paul is here rejoicing in his sufferings on behalf of the Colossians, and by this he says he is fulfilling the shortcomings ("that which is behind") of the afflictions of Christ in His flesh for the church. The verb ἀνταναπληρῶ is a double compound, a very rare verb and used only here in the New Testament. Paul made choice of this word, no doubt, to convey a special thought. The simple verb πληρῶω means "to fill." The prefix ἀνά adds the idea of "up," the compound meaning "to fill up." But ἀντί prefixed means "opposite," or as a helper at the other end of the load fulfilling his share, or "in turn." Robertson states it like this: "It is now Paul's 'turn' at bat, to use a baseball figure. Christ had His 'turn,' the grandest of all and suffered for us all in a sense not true of anyone else. It is the idea of balance or correspondence in ἀντί as seen in Demosthenes's use of this verb. (*De Symm.*, p. 282), 'the poor balancing the rich.'"\* Paul is here stating a great truth that a true Christian becomes a joint sharer with Christ in the sufferings that sin has caused.

A use true to basic meaning is found in Luke 10:31, 32 where appears the double compound ἀντιπαρῆλθεν. Here in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest, having seen the wounded man, "passed by on the other side." The verb ἦλθεν is from ἔρχομαι, and means "went"; παρῆλθεν is "went or passed by"; and ἀντιπαρῆλθεν is "passed by opposite." That is, he went way over on the opposite side of the road.

In Romans 8:26 where we are told the Spirit helpeth our infirmities Paul uses the word συναντιλαμβάνεται, which is translated by the colorless word "helpeth." Here we have the word λαμβάνεται, which is the present middle form for the word "to take," that is, "to take for oneself" in which the subject shares in the results of the action. This is prefixed by ἀντί, which would give the added idea of "to take a hold opposite to another for the purpose of sharing in the results." The σύν prefixed adds the thought

of "together with," or the totality of the whole word would be "to mutually take hold opposite to us and mutually share in the results." In other words, the Holy Spirit will form a team with us to present our petitions to God. He is not to do it all alone, and we are not to do it alone. It is together. How close becomes our relationship with Him! This is similar to the use of this same word in Luke 10:40, where Martha appeals to Christ to command her sister to help her. She actually says, "Bid her therefore that she take hold opposite to me as a team that we may mutually share together in the results or satisfaction of the work."

The word "to answer" is ἀποκρίνομαι. It is made up of the middle voice of κρίνω, "to judge"; the middle voice would mean "to judge for oneself." With the prefix ἀπό, "away from," it would suggest "to bring out what one has judged within himself" or "to answer." Now with ἀντί plus ἀποκρίνομαι as in Luke 14:6 and Romans 9:20 it would mean "to bring out one's inner judgment on a par with what was said."

Far richer in meaning than the word "recompense" in Luke 14:14 is the double compound used there, namely, ἀνταποδοῦναι. Here we have the infinitive δοῦναι—"to give"—prefixed with ἀπό—"away from"—plus ἀντί—"opposite" or "equivalent to." Thus it would read, "Thou shalt be blessed, because they have not to give back to thee an equivalent, for it shall be rendered back to thee an equivalent thereto in the resurrection of the just." In other words, accounts will be balanced by God, not by men, in the resurrection day. As far as our good deeds are concerned we should not expect an equal return, but we will receive as a reward in the resurrection the counterpart to what we have done.

These are just a few of the many riches discovered in God's Word as we feel and think with the writers as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Even the word *antichrist* takes on a truer meaning. He is not one primarily against Christ, but one who attempts to be "instead of" Christ. Let us as ministers make this point clear in dealing with this topic, and it will save many misunderstandings. No, ἀντί is not basically "anti."

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Geo. H. Doran Co., 1923).
- <sup>2</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1957), under ἀντί.
- <sup>3</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4, p. 484.

# Church Qualifications for Proper Fund Raising

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THE raising of funds is a major problem in any church. Raising funds from within the church for conference projects is a common conference administrative problem. When certain conditions exist, fund raising is relatively easy. Under other conditions it is very difficult. Every church family develops an individual personality. Standards of giving become acceptable. Social attitudes toward the purpose of the church are formed. Some churches qualify for successful fund raising; others do not. We will consider three types of church personalities.

1. The growing, expanding, progressive church has problems that are good in themselves. The school is probably crowded, and the teaching staff should be increased. Membership, tithe, and mission offerings are consistently increasing. There are various needs for building expansion. The need for local funds is great.

2. The stagnant church is one that has experienced little change in several years.

THE MINISTRY